

On the Road

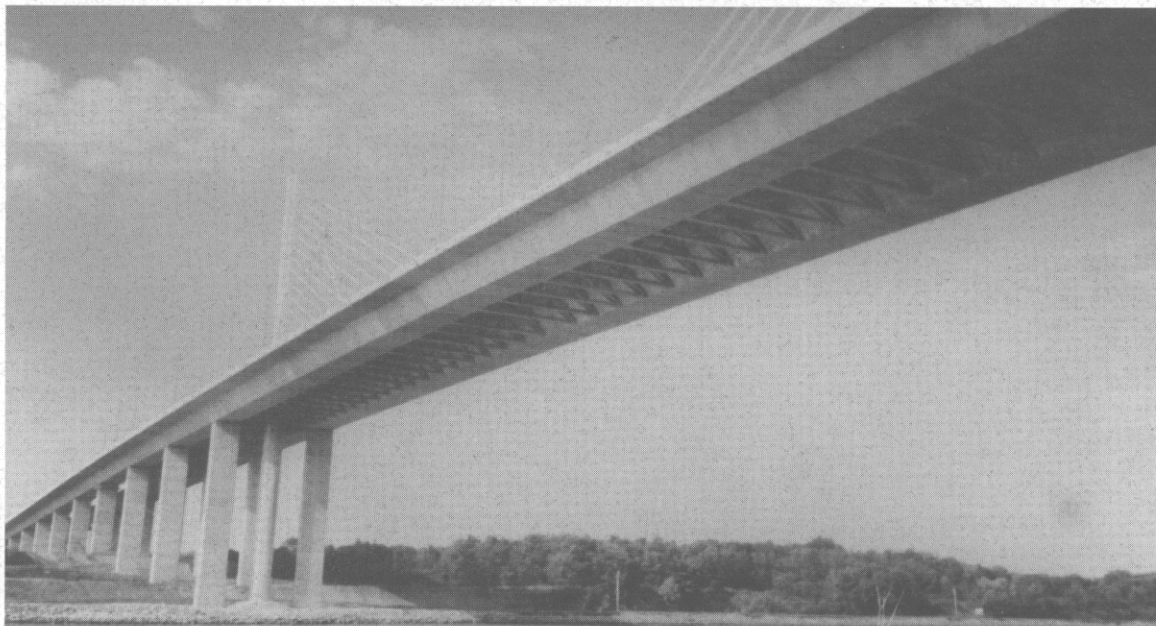
THE RELIEF ROUTE — SR 1

Issue 19

DELAWARE ROUTE 7 TO US ROUTE 113

Winter 1996

OCTOBER PUBLIC WORKSHOP PREVIEWED OPENING OF THE ST. GEORGES SECTION



Jennifer Dewiller/KFS

The new bridge is the fourth to cross the C&D Canal in the vicinity of St. Georges.

More than 200 people attended the public workshop in October 1995 about the St. Georges section of SR 1 which subsequently opened to traffic in December. Attendees discussed the new traffic patterns created by this section of SR 1—which includes the new C&D Canal bridge—with DelDOT representatives, engineers and planners.

Two months after the workshop, the newest C&D Canal bridge opened with fanfare, with a walk over and dedication ceremonies led by transportation officials and elected officials. Though the weather was blustery, an estimated 2,000 people crossed the span on foot, got an up-close tour of the bridge and bird's-eye view of the southern New Castle County winter landscape.

One of the concerns expressed by persons attending the workshop was the combined routing of US 13 and SR 1 from Route 72 to Tybouts. While these plans have been on paper since the design public hearing about the section in 1988, it came as a surprise to some that the two roads were combined north of Wrangle Hill. To respond to these and other concerns, DelDOT es-

tablished a Working Group of key community representatives. The group first met October 26, 1995, and has met monthly since then, making considerable progress. (See "One Perspective" on page 3 for more information about the St. Georges Working Group.)

While motorists are glad to see the St. Georges section open, questions about the fate of the old St. Georges Bridge still linger. The US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) has agreed to keep the bridge open for at least one year while engineers conduct studies to assess whether future traffic volumes confirm the need for the bridge. While through and longer-distance travelers are likely to use SR 1, local traffic will likely continue on US 13. With the potential for even greater development south of the canal than originally planned, traffic volumes using US 13 could be higher than current forecasts predict.

DelDOT is committed to keeping the St. Georges Bridge open. The Corps is mandated to provide "good and sufficient" bridges over the canal. DelDOT maintains that this bridge is a needed crossing and will continue to work with the Corps to resolve this issue. ■



Delaware Department of
Transportation

Anne P. Canby
Secretary

On the Road is published periodically by the Delaware Department of Transportation and is the official newsletter of SR 1, the US Route 13 Relief Route.

ST. GEORGES FOLLOW-UP WORKSHOP

DelDOT will conduct a follow-up workshop about the St. Georges section on Wednesday, March 27, at the Gunning Bedford Middle School, Cox Neck Rd., just north of St. Georges. The workshop will run from 5 to 8 PM, with a presentation at 7 PM. Proposed improvements to US 13 and SR 1, developed by the St. Georges Working Group, will be presented.

For more information about the workshop or to receive your free copy of *On the Road*, please write or call with your request.

On the Road

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Mile STONES

• ODESSA-TOWNSEND SECTION: Nearing construction start

DelDOT will conduct a **public workshop** later this Spring about construction plans for the Odessa-Townsend section. Notices will be sent to recipients of *On the Road*.

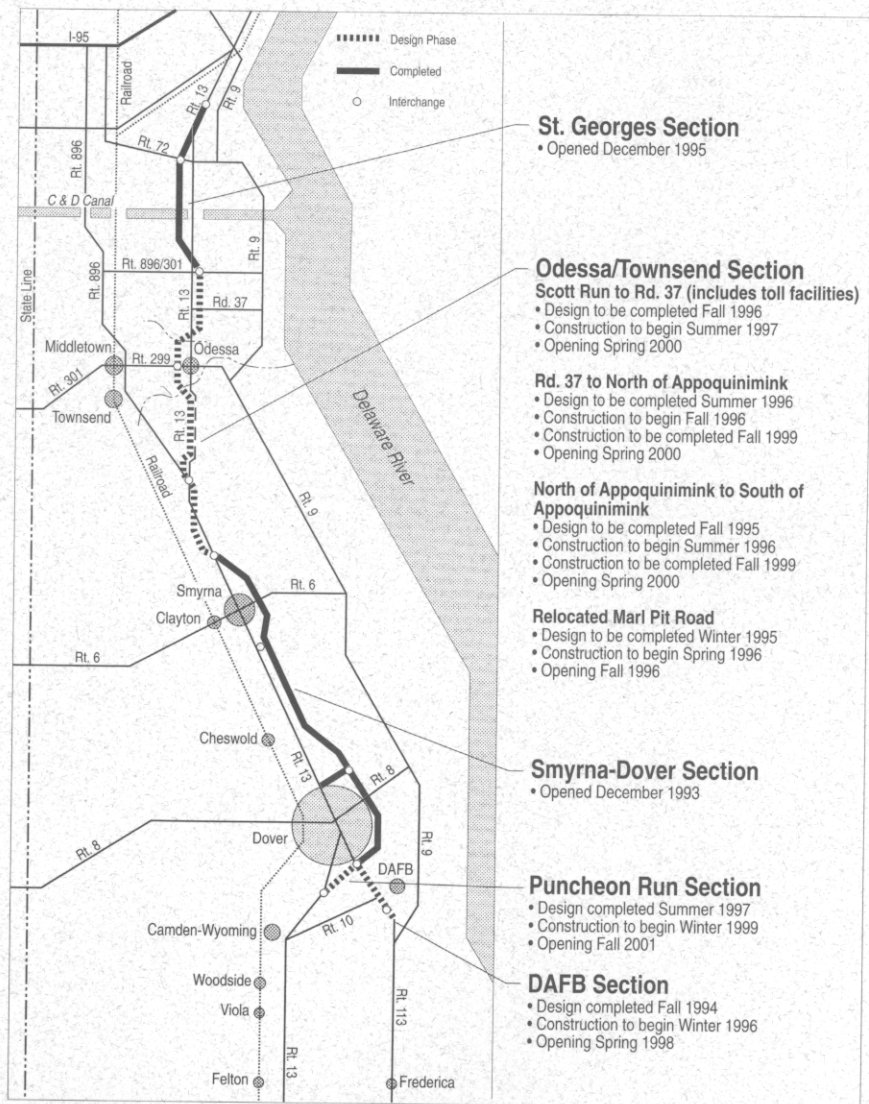
The US Army Corps of Engineers has granted a **Section 404 Permit** for the Odessa-Townsend and Puncheon Run sections of SR 1. When a Section 404 Permit is issued, it means the project has demonstrated that its proposed location, design, and construction will avoid or minimize impacts to wetlands wherever possible. The next step is to submit final mitigation plans for agency review. Techniques, including seeding and new planting, will be used to reestablish wetland conditions at previously identified sites.

A **Flood Plain Permit** application was submitted in February, and is currently under review by the New Castle County Departments of Planning and Public Works. Flood plains—areas which are along water ways and periodically flooded—are important in that they maintain water quality and control pollution, flooding and erosion of shorelines. Damage to flood plains, through construction and development activities, is considered a threat to public safety. The Flood Plain Permit allows development only after the project has demonstrated that it will follow certain procedures so as to avoid or minimize damage.

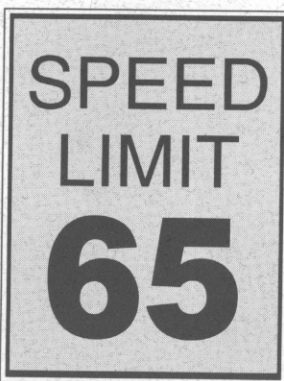
Archeological surveying is well under way. Surveying for archeologically important areas occurs in two phases. Phase I activities consist of walking the fields in search of artifacts on the ground and have discovered such artifacts as fossils. If Phase I proves to be significant, Phase II is implemented. Phase II involves the actual digging of the site before construction begins. Artifacts that have been uncovered to date include historic 18th- and 19th-Century American artifacts, as well as prehistoric Native American artifacts dating from as early as 10,000 BC. Typically, artifacts are washed, marked, catalogued, and sent to the State Museum.

• NEW SPEED LIMIT: Life in the fast lane

On January 26 the new 65 mph speed limit was put into effect in Delaware for a year-long experiment. Motorists can now drive legally at 65 mph along ten miles of I-495 and 18 miles of SR 1, on the Dover-Smyrna bypass. The State will review speed and accident records at the end of the trial period, before the speed limit changes become permanent. ■



The project schedule illustrates SR 1's completed sections and those now in the design and construction phases.



One PERSPECTIVE

"One Perspective" is a regular feature of On the Road. The interviews presented here provide readers with a personal, behind-the-scenes look at the planning, design and construction of SR 1, the US Route 13 Relief Route.

For this Winter 1996 issue, rather than present one perspective, On the Road offers several perspectives, those of the members of the St. Georges Working Group. The Working Group is made up of four Delaware elected officials and ten area residents. The elected officials are Senator James T. Vaughn, 14th District, Representative Oak M. Banning Jr., 9th district, Representative Bruce Ennis, 28th District, and Representative Vincent Lofink, 27th District. The residents are Audrey Baker, Erik Dressler, Roseann Harkins, Kevin Hermann, Eileen Keen, Earle Lester, Bruce Stanley, Richard Stapleford, Nancy Weldin, and Charles Zencey.

DelDOT convened the Working Group in December 1995 to help address some issues associated with the opening of the St. Georges section of SR 1. Below is a summary of members' responses to questions about their experiences on the Working Group.

OTR: *From your perspective, what is the mission of the St. Georges Working Group?*

DRESSLER: The mission is to make SR 1 work best with the surrounding communities, and keep Route 13 as a separate and viable option.

STANLEY: I think it's to make US 13 more accessible—southbound and northbound—and to improve the Route 72 interchange. Even with the projected traffic 20 years down the road, I don't see a problem with merging the highways; this functions very well with I-295 and the Turnpike, for example.

STAPLEFORD: To get US 13 established as a separate road from SR 1 and continue use of the existing St. Georges Bridge.

OTR: *As a member of the Working Group, what kinds of things were you surprised to discover or learn about?*

DRESSLER: I learned how factions of government work together, depending on the issue involved. I now appreciate the level of difficulty involved.

LESTER: If people aren't on top of a project, and it's not explained properly, they will not understand. People have to get more involved.

ZENCEY: I now understand how long it takes to bring things from a conceptual stage to actual



Christine Gobrial/KFS

Members of the St. Georges Working Group at a recent meeting.

accomplishment.

HERMANN: I learned that design and securing financing is a time-consuming process.

STANLEY: It's difficult to get approvals, especially environmental approvals.

WELDIN: I now appreciate the whole process, the rules and the regulations.

OTR: *Why do you consider the Working Group a good method for addressing problems?*

BAKER: The diversity of the group really helps when looking for solutions to problems.

HARKINS: It allows detailed input and in-depth review of issues.

ZENCEY: The Working Group allows for citizen input. Members meet planners and engineers, and exchange ideas.

LESTER: The Working Group relies on local people's expertise. Local people know the issues best.

BANNING: The group gives the engineers a chance to see how their constituents feel. DelDOT seems to be listening.

KEEN: Many people don't feel comfortable expressing themselves in a big crowd; I feel a small group is better. People are more likely to listen and communicate better in this group, one-on-one, as opposed to a big public workshop.

DID YOU KNOW?

- The first St. Georges C&D Canal Bridge was built in the 1820s, and was a swing bridge; the new bridge which opened in December is the fourth bridge to span the C&D Canal.

- The canal used to have a series of locks, before it was widened to accommodate larger ships.

- In 1939 St. Georges' second bridge was struck by a German freighter, the SS Waukegan, and sank into the canal; two bridge workers were killed by the collision.

- After the second bridge was destroyed, the town surrendered its charter because local government could no longer operate due to the separation of North and South St. Georges.

("One Perspective" continued from page 3)

DRESSLER: I am impressed at how quickly a number of our requests have taken place.

OTR: *Why are you a member? What do you bring to the group?*

HARKINS: I'm concerned and I feel strongly about issues affecting St. Georges. I am in the home building industry.

STAPLEFORD: I own a business. I bring to the group a strong knowledge of the area.

DRESSLER: I was asked to be a member by DelDOT; I'm just "Joe Average" citizen in the area.

WELDIN: I can stand back, look and appreciate both sides.

HERMANN: I came up with some ideas and proposals during the public workshop and DelDOT encouraged me to join the group.

BANNING: My role is to represent my constituents by expressing their concerns to the group.

STANLEY: Since I'm in the construction industry, perhaps I know more about the road-building process than the average person.

OTR: *How have you been able to communicate progress back to your family, friends and neighbors?*

KEEN: As a postmaster in St. Georges, I come in contact with many people and I get a lot of feedback from the public, not just from Delaware, but Maryland and Pennsylvania as well. People call me and express their concerns and views.

HERMANN: I've kept in touch with a lot of people; I can show people on the map what we've discussed.

STAPLEFORD: Friends and employees are curious; everyone agrees the two roads should be separate in this section.

HARKINS: I tell them to get involved! Make your desires known. ■

For More INFORMATION

TO OUR READERS

The State of Delaware and the consultant team are committed to continuing the citizen-input process during the design and construction phases of the project. We invite you to write to us with questions or comments regarding *On the Road* or to arrange for a presentation to bring your group up to date on the Relief Route.

CONTACT DelDOT

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- Public Information: Contact Christine Gillan, manager of external affairs, at 302-739-4313
- Design Issues: Contact David DuPlessis, project manager, at 302-739-4657
- Environmental Issues: Contact Joe Wutka, assistant director of planning, at 302-739-3240
- Right-of-Way Acquisition and Relocation: Contact Ira White, project acquisitions manager, at 302-739-2776
- Construction Issues: Contact Tom Clements, SR 1 construction engineer, at 302-734-9533

Or CONTACT THE CONSULTANT TEAM *On the Road*

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